

# The 10 Best – Very Cool Things

We've had a lot of interesting items through our door over the course of the last thirteen years, here's a roundup of some of the 'coolest' By that we mean they either looked cool, sounded cool or still are cool. Or could be used as cricket bats...



**1: Elektron SFX-6 MonoMachine:** Elektron gear is, by the company's own admission, sometimes a pain in the rear to use. The Monomachine was not the easiest, either, but by god it was distinctive. It sounded cool, looked cool, and would (no doubt about this whatsoever) look incredibly cool in some hipster's loft apartment in Shoreditch. Right now. You could, if needs be, also use it as a cricket bat to play the Aussies in the Ashes at Lords



**2: Roland V-Synth XT** – The V-Synth keyboard was an underrated synth, mainly down to a fairly complex operating system and somewhat underwhelming polyphony when used at maximum power. But work with it and you'll get some incredible results – and if you can get the V-Synth XT, you get all of that, a D-50 expansion, a vocal expansion and, importantly, two ruddy great big metal handles to carry it around if you don't rack it up. How could you resist?



**3: Roger Linn Design Adrenalinn II-** A guitar amp modeller and drum machine all in one box – as you do. It might have slightly confused us on its release, but it's one of those products that if you find one now and plug it into your studio-based set-up you're pretty sure to get some unusual results, that the rest of the crowd can only dream of...





**4: TLA Fat Track** – TLA was a great British company responsible for some fine outboard. We say ‘was’, as we thought it had gone wayward, but the website suggests the company is still in operation. Either way, it made some fantastic retro/pro/new gear, and the Fat Track was a great, if misunderstood interface between old signals and new tech, offering tracking, summing and monitoring, a great analogue sound and DAW integration via ADAT.



**5: Dave Smith Instruments Poly Evolver** – It needed a software editor to do it justice, cost over a grand and looked as interesting as a classic 90s digital synth, but if you can get one of these fellas cheaply you’ll get a superb instrument and – because of all of the reasons above – probably one that not too many other people have invested in...





**6: Access Virus TI** – Continuing our theme of hardware and software boundaries being blurred, here's a synth that was (and still is) definitely hard, but acts like a plug-in in your DAW. With a legendary Access sound, it will do everything you expect sonically, and looks the business and also slots into whatever studio situation you throw at it...



**7: Korg Wavedrum WD-X** – With multiple sensors, playing the Wavedrum is a creative experience, no matter how good your beat making. Technical knowledge isn't a prerequisite either – beat making with a piece of technology has never been so simple nor cool.



**8: Yamaha Tenori-On** – It was certainly an unlikely product for the Japanese giant to release, but Tenori-On captured a lot of people’s imaginations, not least big names such as Bjork and Peter Gabriel. The device, a grid of 16×16 lights, allowed you to create complete tunes with a big range of FM sounds. Better still, lights flashed as notes triggered.

You could, if you wanted to stretch the truth a little, say that this was the device that kick-started our fascination with great-looking cool gear. OK, that’s pushing it, but it helped...





**9: Jazzmutant Lemur/Dexter** – Before the iPad brought touch technology to the masses, French company JazzMutant (surely the coolest name for an audio company ever) brought touch technology to the non masses. At over €2,300, the Lemur – and replacement Dexter – were expensive, but showed how cool hardware could be and, in controlling Logic, also showed what the future of control could be. It could be touch!

They were pretty much superseded by the iPad, and somewhat ironically they also live on in that format...



**10: Shadow Hills Mastering Compressor** – Arguably, we shouldn't include this beast of a compressor as a) we haven't reviewed it and b) finding any information about it on the Shadow Hills website involves cracking a code, but it's one of the finest-sounding and finest-looking compressors out there, has controls straight out of a 1950s spaceship and looks a little like Darth Vader in low light. What more do you need?

## Comments

8 comments

Tags: [Dave Smith Instruments](#), [Elektron](#), [Features](#), [JazzMutant](#), [Korg](#), [Roger Linn](#), [Roland](#), [Shadow Hills](#), [TLA](#), [Yamaha](#)